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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5214
INFO RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 0136
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 9819
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 6761
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 4822
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3463
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0527
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3555
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2632
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 7330
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5064
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1732
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000133

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/23/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: DEATH THREATS CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF
INTIMIDATION

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr., for reasons 1.4(b,d).

¶1. (C) Summary. Death threats are aggravating the atmosphere of intimidation in Sri Lanka. Twenty-two individuals, mostly anti-war advocates and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) sympathizers, received death threats in January from a shadowy Sinhalese ultra-nationalist group called the "Gang of Evil Doers." On January 10, the German Ambassador also received a death threat. The diplomatic community and the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) see these threats as a form of harassment and intimidation. However - in contrast to other groups who regularly use assassination as a tool - there is little reason at present to think this group will carry out its threats. End Summary.

¶2. (C) In early January, twenty-two individuals received an e-mail containing a power point presentation in Sinhala calling for their deaths. The group includes government officials, politicians, businessmen, and journalists who are either outspoken opponents of the war, or who have identified the LTTE as "freedom fighters" rather than terrorists. The first slide reads, "Let's identify the Sinhala traitors." The next two slides show photos and names of the so-called traitors. The final slide reads, "Kill them. Save our Motherland."

¶3. (C) The logo of a group calling themselves Mahasohon Kalliya, or Gang of Evil Doers, appears at the bottom of the last slide. The group, also referred to by some as "Big Devil," maintains a Web site at www.mahasohonkalliya.com. The President of the group, Dammika Hettiarachchi, has a Yahoo! group site at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ravanabrothers> and a Web site at www.ruhunuyaka.com. Ravana Brothers is a Sinhala nationalist group whose name refers to the mythical King Ravana of the Ramayana epic, a militant king who used devils to kill his enemies. Ruhunuyaka, meaning Devil of the South, is a third such nationalist group. These internet sites feature an advertisement for a devil dance ceremony to invoke curses on those who oppose war. The advertisement, regrettably, also prominently features the logos of a

government-owned television station and two government-owned radio stations that are co-sponsoring the event. These groups' Web sites espouse the same political messages as the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), Sri Lanka's largest and most influential nationalist party. While there is no apparent direct link between the three groups and the JVP, the specific phrases used on the Web sites mirrors those used by the JVP. These groups are clearly on the fringes of the JVP-led nationalist movement, and evidence suggests they work closely together.

14. (C) Separately, the German Ambassador on January 10 received a letter warning him not to "bully" Sri Lanka and threatening to send him home "in a box" if he tries to "break up this country." He also received a handwritten follow-up note the next day with the same message. The German Ambassador told DCM and RSO that the threat was obviously meant to harass and intimidate him, but he does not consider it serious. The German Embassy immediately contacted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Sri Lankan police after receiving the letter, and police presence in front of the German Embassy was stepped up. Ambassador Blake received a copy of the German Ambassador's death threat in the mail on January 15. RSO interprets Ambassador Blake's receipt of the letter as an attempt to intimidate the diplomatic community as a whole, but perceives no direct threat to the Ambassador. Ambassador concurs.

15. (C) COMMENT: While the proliferation of death threats in the last few weeks is alarming, they almost certainly are intended to harass and intimidate. The JVP and the groups close to it have not been known to use assassination as a tool since they ended their armed insurrection against the

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government in the late 1980s. The spectrum of targets -- journalists, businessmen, and even foreign diplomats -- shows that the paranoid fringe of the nationalist movement is casting a wide net in choosing its enemies. Nonetheless, one cannot take death threats in Sri Lanka too lightly. There are several groups that issue genuine death threats and carry them out, including the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) the Karuna faction (a splitoff from the LTTE) -- not to mention the LTTE itself, which uses assassination, but does not usually advertise its plans in advance, nor take credit for its attacks afterwards.
BLAKE